

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L USNATO 1413

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MPOL, NATO, IT
SUBJECT: ITALIAN NAVAL CONSCRIPT SERVICE

SUMMARY: SYG LUNS HAS SENT A REPLY TO AMBASSADOR CATALANO
(ITALIAN PERMREP) EXPRESSING HIS CONCERN OVER ITALIAN
CONSIDERATION OF REDUCTIONS IN NAVAL CONSCRIPT SERVICE
FROM 18 MONTHS TO 12 MONTHS AND HIS INTENTION TO RAISE
THE SUBJECT AT AN EARLY DPC MEETING. ACTION REQUESTED:
WASHINGTON APPROVAL OF PROPOSAL IN PARA 3. END SUMMARY.

1. THERE FOLLOWS THE TEXT OF THE ITALIAN PERMREP'S FEB 10,
1977 LETTER TO SYG LUNS ANNOUNCING GOI CONSIDERATION OF
REDUCING NAVY CONSCRIPT TIME FROM 18 MONTHS TO 12 MONTHS,
TO CORRESPOND WITH THE LENGTH OF CONSCRIPT TIME FOR THE
OTHER TWO MILITARY SERVICES. BEGIN TEXT:

I HAVE BEEN INSTRUCTED BY MY AUTHORITIES TO OFFICIALLY
INFORM YOU OF A PROJECT NOW UNDER CONSIDERATION, AIMING AT
REDUCING THE PERIOD OF CONSCRIPTION FOR THE ITALIAN NAVY FROM
THE PRESENT 18 TO 12 MONTHS.

YOU ARE AWARE THAT THE LENGTH OF CONSCRIPT SERVICE FOR
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THE ARMY AND AIR FORCE HAD ALREADY BEEN REDUCED TO 12 MONTHS.
HENCE THE NEED TO EQUALIZE THE OBLIGATION FOR THE THREE SERVICES,
BY ELIMINATING A DISPARITY PLAYING AGAINST THOSE CITIZENS WHO ARE
CALLED UP FOR THE NAVY. IN OTHER WORDS, REASONS OF SOCIAL, PSY-
CHOLOGICAL AND JURIDICAL ORDER ARE BEHIND THE NEW PROJECT.
MY AUTHORITIES, IN NOTIFYING TO OUR ALLIES THEIR MOTIVA-
TIONS AND INTENTION, HAVE ASKED ME TO STRESS THAT, IN CASE OF
APPROVAL, THE ABOVE PROJECT WOULD HAVE GRADUAL IMPLEMENTATION AND
THAT ALL POSSIBLE COLLATERAL MEASURES WOULD BE ADOPTED IN ORDER TO
MAINTAIN THE PRESENT LEVEL OF EFFICIENCY OF THE ITALIAN NAVY.

A COMMUNICATION TO THE SAME EFFECT HAS BEEN DELIVERED TO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE MILITARY COMMITTEE BY THE ITALIAN REPRESENTATIVE. I SHALL KEEP YOU UP TO DATE ON FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS ON THIS MATTER.

I AM SENDING COPIES OF THIS LETTER TO ALL PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVES IN THE DPC. END TEXT.

2. THERE FOLLOWS LUNS' MARCH 3 REPLY TO CATALANO, EXPRESSING HIS CONCERN OVER THE PROPOSED REDUCTION IN NAVY CONSCRIPT SERVICE AND HIS INTENTION TO PLACE THE SUBJECT ON AN EARLY DPC AGENDA. BEGIN TEXT:

THANK YOU FOR YOUR LETTER OF 10TH FEBRUARY, 1977 INFORMING ME OF A PROJECT NOW UNDER CONSIDERATION BY THE ITALIAN AUTHORITIES TO REDUCE THE LENGTH OF CONSCRIPT SERVICE FOR THE ITALIAN NAVY FROM 18 TO 12 MONTHS.

I AM BOUND TO EXPRESS SOME CONCERN AT THIS DEVELOPMENT WHICH HAS ARISEN SO SOON AFTER A SERIES OF REDUCTIONS IN THE SIZE OF THE ITALIAN ARMED FORCES AS A CONSEQUENCE OF THE RESTRUCTURING PLAN AND WHICH ALREADY INCLUDED A REDUCTION IN THE LENGTH OF CONSCRIPT TIME FOR ALL THREE SERVICES. I NOTE THAT YOU GIVE PARITY OF TREATMENT AS THE MAIN REASON FOR THE PROPOSED CHANGE, BUT YOU WILL ALLOW ME TO POINT OUT THAT OTHER COUNTRIES OF THE ALLIANCE DO NOT FEEL IT NECESSARY TO HAVE THE SAME CONSCRIPT PERIOD FOR ALL THREE SERVICES BECAUSE OF THE DIFFERENT REQUIREMENTS BETWEEN THEM.

AS YOU WILL BE AWARE, THE MILITARY COMMITTEE HAS
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NOW PROVIDED ITS ASSESSMENT OF THE EFFECTS ON THE ALLIANCE'S MILITARY CAPABILITIES OF THE RESTRUCTURING PLAN AND I INTEND TO PLACE THIS ON THE AGENDA OF AN EARLY MEETING OF THE DEFENCE PLANNING COMMITTEE. I THINK THAT IT WOULD BE APPROPRIATE FOR THE COMMITTEE AT THE SAME TIME TO NOTE THE PROPOSALS IN YOUR LATEST LETTER, INCLUDING YOUR OFFER OF FURTHER INFORMATION ON COLLATERAL MEASURES AND TO EXPRESS THEIR PRELIMINARY VIEWS. I HOPE THAT FINAL DECISIONS BY YOUR AUTHORITIES ON THE PROPOSAL TO REDUCE THE CONSCRIPT PERIOD FOR THE ITALIAN NAVY CAN BE DEFERRED UNTIL THE DEFENCE PLANNING COMMITTEE HAS HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO CONSIDER THE IMPLICATIONS.

I AM SENDING A COPY OF THIS LETTER TO OUR COLLEAGUES ON THE DEFENCE PLANNING COMMITTEE, INCLUDING THE CHAIRMAN OF THE MILITARY COMMITTEE. END TEXT.

3. THE IS HAS NOT YET DECIDED WHEN THE DPC WILL CONSIDER THE ITALIAN PROPOSAL. WHEN THE SUBJECT IS DISCUSSED IN THE DPC, WE PROPOSE TO:

- A. CONCUR IN RESERVATIONS LUNS RAISES IN HIS LETTER,
- B. NOTE THAT THEIR REDUCTION OF NAVAL CONSCRIPT SERVICE, AND HENCE PERSONNEL EFFECTIVENESS, CANNOT BE JUSTIFIED ON THE BASIS OF ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS, WHICH UNDERLAY OTHER RECENT CUTS IN ITALIAN FORCES;
- C. POINT OUT THE NEED FOR BETTER TRAINED PERSONNEL

REQUIRED TO MAN THE MORE SOPHISTICATED SHIPS WHICH WILL
RESULT FROM ITALY'S NEW NAVAL CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM, WHICH
ARE URGENTLY NEEDED TO MEET THE GROWING SOVIET THREAT IN
THE MEDITERRANEAN.

4. ACTION REQUESTED: WASHINGTON GUIDANCE.STRAUSZ-HUPE

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